

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Bureau of Health and Nutrition Services and Child/Family/School Partnerships
Child Nutrition Programs
25 Industrial Park Road
Middletown, Connecticut 06457-1543

OPERATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP) and Special Milk Programs

FROM: Maureen Staggenborg, Director, Child Nutrition Programs

DATE: May 15, 2006

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum # 11-06

- I. Income Eligibility Guidelines for July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007
- II. Information for the Implementation of Free/Reduced Price Meals and Free Milk Benefits for School Year 2006-2007

This memorandum addresses materials that are needed to implement free and reduced price meals, after school snack, and milk benefits. As a reminder:

- School districts are required to use family/household applications and may not request that households complete separate family applications for each school.
- Households must be informed on the free and reduced price application that WIC participants may be eligible for free or reduced price meals.
- Homeless, migrant and runaway youth are categorically eligible for free meals.
- Privatized military housing allowance is excluded from income eligibility determinations.
- Eligibility determinations are valid for the entire school year unless temporarily approved or status changes due to verification.

These forms will be available **after May 17, 2006** via the CT State Department of Education's Child Nutrition website: <http://www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/nutrition/NSLP/index.htm> Most of these materials will be available in both the PDF format and Word. Please read through this information carefully and share with the appropriate personnel in your school district.

Reminder:

Residential facilities (RCCIs) must refer to these materials if you serve day clients and claim their meals for free or reduced price reimbursement.

Special Milk Programs (SMP) must refer to these materials if you serve and claim free milk.

Note: The parent letter for Special Milk Program is different from the parent letter for meals.

All National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs (NSLP, SBP) that claim free and reduced price meals and/or snacks must refer to these materials.

The following materials pertain to the implementation of the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, After School Snack and Special Milk Programs. These materials can be downloaded from the Child Nutrition Programs website.

I. Income Eligibility Guidelines - These guidelines are used for determining eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free milk. Free meals and free milk use the same guidelines. These guidelines are in effect from July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007. A copy is attached.

II. Information for the Implementation of Free/Reduced Price Meals and Free Milk Benefits for School Year 2005-2006

A. Sample Policy Statement for Free and Reduced Price Meals, After School Snack Program and/or Free Milk

This sample provides a framework for developing procedures to dispense lunch, breakfast, snacks, and/or milk without regard to children's ability to pay. *All sponsors are required to develop and maintain a copy of these procedures on file.* This Policy Statement is your agreement that meals, snacks and milk will be dispensed without discrimination. Retain in your files. *Do not send a copy to the Child Nutrition Program office.*

B. Sample Parent/Guardian Letter to Households – School Meals and Snacks

You must complete a parent letter with your specific program information. Copy enough to provide one copy for each household in your schools. *Parent letters for lunch and breakfast include **reduced price guidelines ONLY.***

C. Sample Parent/Guardian Letter to Households – Special Milk Program

This special Milk Program Sample letter is appropriate if the sponsor:

- Operates only a Special Milk Program with a free milk option, or
- Operates a Special Milk Program with a free milk option in split-session kindergarten.

D. Sample Application and Instructions for Free or Reduced Price Meals or Free Milk Family/household Application

Many households have different sources of income at different frequencies, such as weekly or bi-weekly wages and monthly social security benefits. Past practice has been to convert all income to a monthly amount; USDA established a conversion factor of 4.33 for weekly income and 2.15 for bi-weekly income. However, use of these conversion factors has resulted in some perceived inconsistencies in the relationship between converted amounts and the weekly, bi-weekly, bi-monthly, and monthly income limits shown in the published Income Eligibility Guidelines (IEG), which are established by dividing annual income limits by the annual income frequency, and rounding up to the next whole dollar. While these conversion factors have created some inconsistent results, no eligible household has been denied eligibility. To avoid these problems, we are recommending the following procedures:

- If a household has only one income source, or if all sources are the same frequency, do not use conversion factors. Compare the income or the sum of the incomes to the published IEG for the appropriate frequency and household size to make the eligibility determination.
- If a household reports income sources at more than one frequency, the preferred method is to annualize all income by multiplying weekly income by 52, income received every two weeks by 26, income received twice a month by 24, and income

received monthly by 12. *Do not round the values resulting from each conversion.* Sum all the unrounded converted values and compare the unrounded total to the published IEG for annual income for the appropriate household size.

E. Addenda

Included with these application samples are two additional pages referred to as an *Addendum A* and *Addendum B*. The reason for the Addenda is that schools increasingly use income eligibility data to offer other benefits to students. ***DO NOT distribute these addenda to parents without reason. Review the purposes of each addendum and use if appropriate.*** Note: Child Nutrition regulations require that you must have parents/guardians' permission in order to release certain information. If a school district wishes to offer additional benefits to students, you will want to attach the Addenda to your application. Please see Sample Addendum A and Addendum B to determine if these will be included in your determination process. If you are not going to attach Addendum A or B to your application, then exclude the "Optional wording for sponsors" on the *Parent/guardian letter to the households*.

- **Addendum A** – Addendum to Application for Free or Reduced Price Meals or Free Milk Benefits Use this Addendum only if your school district offers additional benefits to students on the basis of the students' income eligibility. Note that the parent/guardian has to specifically authorize (sign) to allow information to be released for each benefit. On this form, you are required to **clearly state** each benefit being offered, and you must state the **specific entity** that is offering the benefit. ***DO NOT send this Addendum out blank.*** If you have questions about this process, please call the Child Nutrition Programs office.
- **Addendum B** – HUSKY Insurance Plan In cooperation with the Department of Social Services, we strongly encourage you to also include Addendum B in your distribution mailing to parents. Please note that parents are asked to pursue their interest directly with the HUSKY Program. They are NOT asked to return this form to the school.

F. Sample Parent/Guardian Notification Letter

You are required to notify parents/guardians of children's eligibility for benefits as soon as possible upon determination. Please copy this sample onto sponsor letterhead and use for notification purposes.

G. Sample Public Release

Child nutrition programs are required to publicly notify their communities that benefits are being offered. You are not required to pay for this notification. You are required to develop a press release, and to document the date when the information was released to the media. We also suggest that you make every effort to notify the community of the benefits by other means. For example, you might choose to send a notice to any large corporation anticipating layoffs. You may wish to post information on a community bulletin board.

H. Written Collection Procedures

Sponsors must have written procedures for each site that describe how the children receive their meals, snacks and/or milk in a way that protects their privacy with regards to household economic status while maintaining accuracy. Meals, snacks and/or milk must be counted accurately **at the point that they are served**. Sponsors may use tickets, tokens, rosters, pin numbers, (or other ideas), to identify children's eligibility for benefits. The important point is that the children's eligibility status is not overtly identified in any way.

These written procedures are reviewed and approved by the Child Nutrition staff. **If procedures change, the amended procedure must be forwarded to the Child Nutrition program.** To obtain a copy of the collection procedure form, go to the CNP website: <http://www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/nutrition/Forms/CollectionProced.pdf> The website contains a sample collection procedure description form. Sponsors are to develop a narrative of the actual processes in place in their schools, and retain these on file except in the case of changes.

I. After School Snack Program Application

The application for the After School Snack Program will be available after **July 1, 2006** on the Child Nutrition Program website under After School Snack Program. *Please note that all applications must be submitted to the Child Nutrition Programs for approval **two weeks prior** to the **start** of the After School Snack Program.*

Questions pertaining to this Operational Memorandum may be directed to:

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